

Message Text

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TO AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS IMMEDIATE

INFO USMISSION NATO IMMEDIATE

S E C R E T STATE 129146

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: NATO, MCAP, BE

SUBJECT: SECDEF LETTER TO BELGIAN MINISTER OF DEFENSE

PLEASE DELIVER THE FOLLOWING MESSAGE DURING MORNING OF
JULY 2, TO PAUL VANDEN BOEYNANTS, MINISTER OF DEFENSE,
BELGIUM, FROM SECRETARY OF DEFENSE SCHLESINGER.
BEGIN MESSAGE. AFTER YOUR DEPARTURE I REALIZED THAT
WE HAD CONCENTRATED OUR DISCUSSIONS ON LAND FORCES
AND I WANTED YOU TO KNOW THAT WITH RESPECT TO NAVAL
FORCES WE WILL BE MAKING SOME CHANGES IN OUR NAVAL
COMMITMENTS TO NATO IN OUR REPLY TO DPQ 73. THESE
CHANGES DO NOT REPRESENT ANY LESSENING OF OUR SUPPORT
FOR NATO. FOR SEVERAL YEARS THE US NAVAL MODERNIZATION
PROGRAM HAS BEEN IMPROVING THE CAPABILITIES OF NAVAL
FORCES COMMITTED TO NATO. HOWEVER, THIS MODERNIZATION
PROGRAM HAS ALSO RESULTED IN THE RETIRBMENT OF MANY OLDER
SHIPS FROM THE ACTIVE FLEET IN ORDER TO MEET THE

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MODERNIZATION GOALS. THEREFORE, WE FIND IT NECESSARY

IN THE NEAR FUTURE TO REDUCE THE 252 SHIPS COMMITTED
TO NATO BY TWENTY-SEVEN DESTROYER TYPES AND NINE DIESEL
POWERED SUBMARINES.

THROUGH FUTURE QUALITATIVE AND QUANTITATIVE IMPROVEMENTS
WE EXPECT MAJOR IMPROVEMENTS IN READINESS AND

CAPABILITIES. FOR EXAMPLE: AS A RESULT OF OUR FLEET
MODERNIZATION PROGRAM, THE PERCENTAGE OF SHIPS OVER
20 YEARS OLD HAS GRADUALLY BEEN REDUCED TO 35 PERCENT
OF THE ACTIVE FORCE AND CURRENT PROGRAMS ARE DESIGNED
TO REDUCE THIS FIGURE TO 25 PERCENT BY 1980. OUR
PROGRAM HAS PROVIDED 152 NEW SHIPS WHICH HAVE BEEN OR
WILL BE COMMISSIONED BETWEEN 1968 AND 1974.

WE SHALL INFORM THE DPC THIS WEEK OF OUR COMTEMPLATED
CHANGES AND TO ASSIST NATO IN UNDERSTANDING THE FULL
IMPLICATIONS OF THE NAVY PROGRAM, ADMIRAL ZUMWALT, US
CHIEF OF NAVAL OPERATIONS, WILL PROVIDE A DETAILED
BRIEFING TO THE MILITARY COMMITTEE ON 6 JULY. YOU
WILL THUS SOON BE RECEIVING THE FULL DETAILS OF OUR NAVY
CHANGES.

BEST REGARDS. JAMES R. SCHLESINGER. END MESSAGE. ROGERS

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